



Herb Kohl
Educational Foundation

News Release



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Contact: Patrick Gasper, DPI Communications Officer, (608) 266-3559
Kim Marggraf, Herb Kohl Educational Foundation Inc., (920) 457-1727

JoAnn Miller named Wisconsin representative to national Teacher of the Year program

Herb Kohl Educational Foundation will award \$6,000 to Wisconsin's National Teacher of the Year nominee

MADISON — JoAnn Miller, a high school science and biology teacher at Oconto Falls High School in the Oconto Falls School District, is Wisconsin's representative to the National Teacher of the Year program.

"JoAnn is an educator who leads by example," said State Superintendent Tony Evers. "She sought National Board Certification to improve her professionalism and is taking additional coursework so she can provide cutting-edge science instruction to her students. Her passion for helping young people learn is equaled by her commitment to being an influence on teacher quality. It is an honor to nominate her to be Wisconsin's representative to the national Teacher of the Year competition."

Miller was named Wisconsin's High School Teacher of the Year in a surprise ceremony at her school in September. She received a Kohl Teacher Fellowship last spring. As part of the honor of representing Wisconsin in the national Teacher of the Year program, Miller will receive \$6,000 from the Herb Kohl Educational Foundation. Established in 1990 by U.S. Senator Herb Kohl, the foundation's various award programs have given \$8.2 million to Wisconsin educators, students, and schools over the past 22 years. The total award Miller will receive from the Herb Kohl Educational Foundation is \$10,000.

"Teachers play a vital role in shaping the life of a child," Kohl said. "Recognizing and rewarding that work is an important reason for my support of the Teacher of the Year program in Wisconsin. Teachers deserve recognition for the commitment they make to preparing students to become the workers, leaders, and citizens our state and nation need to build a prosperous future."

Miller is known to push her students to achieve through a science curriculum that includes student-driven inquiry. "By creating a positive classroom environment that invites investigation, discovery, and curiosity, students can open their minds to a world of unforeseen knowledge," she says. She has her Advanced Placement (AP) biology students write biology-themed children's books that translate complex scientific concepts into easy to understand vocabulary and ideas. The project helps AP students master biology concepts as well as introduce science to younger students in an entertaining way. A parent commented that Miller's "classes are difficult and come with high expectations, but only because she knows her students deserve to be challenged."

(more)

Prior to becoming a teacher, Miller served in the U.S. Navy and worked as a quality manager in the food industry. Military training taught her that she could accomplish more than she thought possible. Her experience as the mother of a son who was not interested in school, but is now is a member of the elite Air Force Thunderbirds, is another lesson she shares with students. “I deal with students who have not discovered their potential yet,” she said. “I push them past personal barriers.” I want them to “know that they can succeed tomorrow even if they don’t feel like they’ve succeeded yet.” Her work in the private sector gave Miller knowledge of workplace expectations. She coaches her students “on how to initiate contact, maintain attention, present, and be responsible for their own production.”

Miller founded the school’s Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Symposium, an event that started in 2007 and now engages more than 300 high school students each year. The symposium is a showcase for students to present original scientific research and projects to their fellow classmates, community members, and area business leaders. It also includes an evening science event for the public, connecting families and the school community to the wonders of science. Her Beaker Buddies program pairs elementary students with high school volunteers to perform engaging science labs and projects during after-school hours to further spark interest in science.

In addition to her commitment to student achievement, Miller serves as a cooperating teacher for a student teacher from an area university. Her mentoring, daily feedback, and suggestions contribute to high-quality science educator development. She serves as an adjunct instructor at Northeastern Wisconsin Technical College teaching science to non-traditional adult students. In the community, Miller is a member of the Oconto Falls Friends of the Library to help promote literacy, which she calls the “cornerstone to an educated, responsible citizenry.” She donates meat and eggs from her ranch to a local food pantry and also sells her products to the community at or below cost to promote the benefits of locally grown food.

Miller holds a bachelor of science degree in biology from the University of Wisconsin–Green Bay and a master’s degree in education from Viterbo University in La Crosse. She earned National Board Certification in 2010 and is working on a master’s degree in biology.

Miller is one of four Teachers of the Year chosen to represent Wisconsin’s PK-12 teaching corps for the 2012-13 school year. The others are: Special Services Teacher of the Year **Linda Bergh**, a school counselor at Eagle Point Elementary School in the DeForest School District; Middle School Teacher of the Year **Amy Traynor**, a mathematics teacher at DeLong Middle School in the Eau Claire Area School District; and Elementary School Teacher of the Year **Nancy Terrian**, a third- and fourth-grade teacher at Eisenhower Elementary School in the Wauwatosa School District.

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NOTES: This news release is available electronically at http://dpi.wi.gov/eis/pdf/dpinr2012_112.pdf. A photo of Wisconsin Teacher of the Year JoAnn Miller is available at <http://dpi.wi.gov/sprntdnt/photos/2012.09.06.miller/index.html>. Additional information about the Herb Kohl Educational Foundation is available at <http://www.kohleducation.org/>.